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# REVIEW OF SECTORAL CLUSTER: LAND, DESERTIFICATION, FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY

## Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

## Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources

1. The Commission notes with great concern that an estimated one sixth of the total arable land surface of the globe has been damaged by human-induced soil degradation. A global partnership is required to protect and restore the health of the Earth's terrestrial ecosystems.

2. The Commission notes with concern the convergence of poverty, hunger and the degradation of terrestrial resources in environmentally more fragile marginal lands, where the large majority of poor smallholder farmers are increasingly located. The Commission calls upon Governments, bilateral donors, multilateral financial institutions, technical specialized agencies, and non-governmental organizations to give a high priority to rural development in such lower-potential areas, particularly by enhancing the productivity of farmers on a sustainable basis.

3. The Commission stresses that an integrated approach to the planning and management of land and water resources is central to the implementation of Agenda 21 recommendations concerning land, desertification, mountains, forests and biodiversity. Land needs to be considered as a finite resource relative to many and varied needs; its allocation must aim to satisfy these needs in the most equitable and sustainable way.

4. An integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the planning, development and management of land resources is a process that methodically identifies human and environmental needs; identifies the potential and options for change and

improvement; identifies and evaluates all relevant physical, social, economic and policy factors; and develops a series of actions necessary to permit and facilitate change. The process needs to address an array of cross-sectoral issues, such as the creation of productive employment; the eradication of poverty; responses to pressures on the land caused by poverty; unsustainable consumption and production; population growth; and changing demographic patterns. The clarification and security of land rights, possibly involving land-tenure and ownership reforms, are central to the solution of such problems. A holistic approach to the management of land resources requires the integration of land and water-resource issues as they relate to land use. The mismanagement of land and water often leads to land degradation in the form of erosion, flooding, waterlogging and salinity, and the depletion of groundwater resources. The demands of rural and urban communities for land and its associated water resources will often conflict with each other if they are not properly managed.

5. The Commission notes that soil and water degradation due to contamination by agricultural, urban and industrial effluents is of increasing importance in both developed and developing countries; the Commission invites Governments, international organizations and groups to increase their efforts in this field.

6. A people-oriented approach that is adapted to suit local circumstances is central to the sustainable development of land resources. All stakeholders, especially women, farmers, indigenous peoples, landless labourers and other major groups, should participate in the planning and management of land resources, in identifying problems and in proposing solutions and should also participate in the consensus-building process. For that process, the intermediate level is important: Governments should encourage the participation of all stakeholders at that level. The empowerment of people and communities, the creation of social equity and an enabling environment, and the strengthening of capacities and building of awareness at all levels are all important elements in this multi-stakeholder approach. Security of tenure and the existence of equitable and efficient legal and fiscal systems are important management tools for ensuring increased productivity and securing conservation efforts.

7. The Commission notes with appreciation the outcome of the international workshop on Agenda 21, chapter 10, "Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources", which was organized by the Government of the Netherlands and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and hosted by the Government of the Netherlands (Wageningen, 20-22 February 1995). The Commission invites the Government of the Netherlands and FAO to disseminate the report and recommendations of the workshop as widely as possible.

8. The Commission stresses the importance of the collecting, processing and disseminating of timely and reliable information, as well as the importance of utilizing modern land-assessment and evaluation technologies, together with technologies for resource characterization, all of which are essential for the planning and management of land resources. The development and use of appropriate indicators, including performance indicators, on the basis of sound scientific knowledge that is tailored to meet local requirements and circumstances, is essential for formulating and implementing policies and monitoring results. There is a need to ensure that technical information is

fully linked with social and economic information at the local, regional and national levels. The Commission also takes note with appreciation of the report of the Panel on Science and Technology for Integrated Land Management of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development; the report adds an important dimension in furthering the implementation of chapter 10.

9. The Commission notes with concern the uneven pace of progress achieved in implementing the objectives and recommendations contained in chapter 10 of Agenda 21, especially with regard to existing institutional structures, which are largely sector-oriented, thus leading to an overlapping of governmental responsibilities; the Commission also notes the need for community-driven approaches.

10. The Commission urges Governments to take all necessary steps to achieve the objectives set out in chapter 10 within the agreed time-frame. At the international level, priority should be given to the development of a holistic and integrated framework for establishing social and economic conditions that will facilitate sustainable production and the conservation of biodiversity. Technical and infrastructural support, which can be applied in any country with appropriate modifications to take account of local needs and conditions, will be desirable in many cases. [To this end, the Commission stresses the need to ensure predictable means and additional flows of financial resources to developing countries, as well as the need to ensure the appropriate transfer of environmentally sound technologies.]

11. The Commission urges Governments, in keeping with their respective needs and priorities, to develop national and/or local land-use planning systems that contain a statement of objectives and a detailed timetable for implementation spread over a period of years. Such systems should aim to remove constraints and provide incentives, thus enhancing the involvement and empowerment of peoples; should develop information and management systems; and should modify institutions, establishing suitable linkages among them. The Commission also urges Governments to exchange views on their programmes for integrated land management, involving all sectors of the community and all stakeholder groups, developed and implemented at the appropriate level.

12. The Commission requests the Secretary-General to strengthen coordination and cooperation among the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system by developing and implementing joint approaches and collaborative programmes. FAO, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), other international agencies and Governments, and with the appropriate contributions of non-governmental organizations, should develop tools and recommend actions for integrated land management. Such action should involve the Commission in its capacity as a forum for the exchange of knowledge and experience in an open and transparent manner, with the full and effective participation of developing countries in a way that reflects their specific conditions and needs.

13. The Commission urges Governments, with the cooperation and support of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as appropriate, to pay particular attention to:

(a) Establishing stable land-use systems in areas where important ecosystems or eco-regions are being endangered by human activities;

(b) Applying integrated planning and development approaches in regions that are becoming open to intensified settlement and agricultural production;

(c) Resolving the land and water-use conflicts that arise [between cities and their surrounding rural communities] or [both within rural areas and between cities and their surrounding areas] on such issues as fresh-water use, the treatment and reuse of solid and liquid waste, [appropriate housing,] and transport and other facilities, as well as food production, including through irrigation;

(d) Bringing about integrated approaches to capacity-building;

[(e) Providing both environmentally sound technologies and new and additional financial resources to developing countries for the effective implementation of chapter 10 of Agenda 21].

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